

24 February 1949

Security Research Section

Interrogation Techniques of Unfriendly Countries

During the week of January 16 - 22, 1949, a British Roman Catholic weekly called the "Tablet", published an article in which they claimed that the Hungarian Communists planned to use "actedron", a will-destroying drug, on Cardinal Mindszenty at the time of his trial on charges of high treason. The article in the "Tablet" said that it is common knowledge that political prisoners of Soviet-occupied countries are given the drug after being starved and deprived of water. At first, it produces self-confidence, then a reaction which includes a strong headache and vertigo, according to the article. The latter effects are described as a sense of uncertainty, a blind urge to obey the slightest orders and inability to say no to anything.

In this country, it was later discovered that "actedron" is a trade name for the drug we know as benzedrine (or amphetamine sulfate).

Although no trace of the use of benzedrine for interrogation purposes in the United States can be found, it has been the contention of this office for some time that the drug has strong possibilities for the extraction of information during an interrogation. The drug, benzedrine, administered in sufficiently large doses, acts as a strong stimulant and makes the subject over-confident, undiscriminating and somewhat lacking in inhibitions (provided the subject is allowed no physical outlet for his newly acquired energy other than conversation). It is during this period that it is felt that a great deal of information could be elicited which ordinarily would not be obtainable.

It is further felt that there is also another strong interrogation possibility in the use of benzedrine beside the "benzedrine acceleration" period mentioned above. Following the termination of the stimulation effect of a large dose of benzedrine or a series of small doses, there is a period of physical exhaustion and mental depression. This is caused by the additional demand placed on the body by the drug and by the absence of sufficient fuel, in the form of food, to support the body at the high peak of activity which is always present when one is under the influence of the drug (benzedrine completely nullifies the person's appetite while under its influence). During this state of depression, it is felt that the subject, in his despair, would break down and give out much information which would otherwise be withheld.

The above mentioned possible uses of the drug explain a good portion of the material in the "Tablet's" article. The latter effects, described by the "Tablet" as a blind urge to obey the slightest orders and inability to say no to anything, cannot be explained by any of the physical or mental effects of either the "benzedrine acceleration" period or the following "mental depression" period. For this reason, other techniques must be used in conjunction with the administering of benzedrine to produce the other mentioned conditions.

24 February 1949

Although it is felt that these latter effects could not be produced by bensedrine, it has been the opinion of this office that the "bensedrine depression" phase of the drug could be utilized very readily to produce a state of "subconscious isolation" or "hypnotic state" in which there would be a blind urge to obey the slightest orders and an inability to say no to anything, as mentioned in the article.

In the case of Cardinal Mindszenty's trial, certain admissions of guilt were consistently made over a period of days which would indicate that a condition existed during which the Cardinal was continually under the influence of some unknown force, and not for merely a period of a few hours as would be the case with the utilization of the "bensedrine depression" phase. The production of this "bensedrine depression" phase could be caused to recur periodically but the subject would first have to be given new doses of bensedrine which would produce acceleration before the desired depression. If this were the case, the Cardinal's testimony would be very inconsistent because of the opposite mental state which would be present during the two different psychological phases. For this reason, it is felt that some additional technique was used on Cardinal Mindszenty in conjunction with, or independent of, the administering of the drug, bensedrine.

Every indication, from what information can be obtained, points to the fact that the Cardinal was laboring under a prolonged influence of the type which can be produced only by techniques similar to, or the same as, the various methods of subconscious isolation known to this office. This being the case, the Cardinal could, and would, make consistent partial admissions as he did throughout his trial. Prior to his apprehension, he had made statements to the effect that a confession, to any degree, elicited from him would be obtained through technical methods over which he had no control.

From the information obtained in the "Tablet" article which says that it is common knowledge that political prisoners of Soviet-occupied countries are given interrogation drugs, and from other sources of information - inadequate as they are, it is obvious that Soviet-occupied countries are, to some extent, using drugs to extract information during the interrogation of their prisoners. From conclusions that can be drawn from information available, there is a strong indication that these countries may be further advanced than we might care to believe in the use of such techniques as the use of bensedrine (for the producing of bensedrine acceleration and depression), sodium pentothal (the so-called "truth serum"), scientific duress (third degree techniques) and the use of various degrees of hypnotic suggestion. Skillfully administered, any of the above mentioned techniques could prove to be advantageous to unfriendly countries, and extremely harmful to the efforts of the other party involved. It would appear that each CIA employee exposed to the possible use of these techniques, because of overseas assignments, should be well informed as to his degree of susceptibility to the various procedures and as to how he might recognize the attempted use of each process.

24 February 1949

Fortunately, all persons are not equally susceptible to the various interrogation techniques mentioned. The use of benzodrine does not successfully cause the desired reaction in all persons. The use of the truth serum is successful in between 80% and 75% of all cases where used (exact statistics are not obtainable). The use of the lie detector is successful in approximately 87% of the cases where used, subconscious isolation (utilizing induced hypnosis without the assistance of drugs) is successful in approximately 25% of the cases involving its attempted use. Subconscious isolation (utilizing induced hypnosis in conjunction with drugs) is successful in 80% to 90% of all cases involving its attempted use.

It is possible, through the facilities of this office, and the utilization of subconscious isolation, to condition many persons in such a manner that they are completely unsusceptible or only partially susceptible to a technique to which they were previously vulnerable.

In conjunction with the above, it is suggested that a program be initiated which would serve to inform an applicable employee as to his susceptibility to the various interrogation techniques, to instruct him before his departure concerning the recognition of the attempted uses, as to what counter measures he might take to nullify the success of such an attempt, and if desired, condition him so that he will no longer be susceptible to the various unfriendly interrogation techniques to which he might be exposed.

It is further suggested that a collection requirement be issued so that this office might be the recipient of all available information concerning the interrogation techniques under actual use or research by unfriendly countries. By acquiring such information, this office can at least keep abreast to or possibly surpass these interrogation techniques.

A [REDACTED]